

## **SOUTH KOREA CUSTOMS**

### **Greetings:**

A bow is the traditional greeting, but it is usually accompanied by a handshake between men. As a sign of respect, the left hand may support or rest under the right forearm during the handshake. Women shake hands less often than men do.

Among friends and relatives, a simple nod is acceptable. Children bow when greeting adults.

A common greeting between peers or for subordinates is *Annyong haseyo?* (Are you at peace?). Children often greet each other with a simple *Annyong?* To show respect for a social superior, one adds an honorific: *Annyong hashimnikka?*

### **Gestures:**

Proper courtesy is shown with gestures. Items are passed with both hands or the right hand grasped by the left at the wrist or forearm.

Koreans beckon by waving the fingers together with the palm down. Beckoning with the index finger is rude.

Facial expressions are often more important than body language in communicating unspoken messages. When embarrassed, a person may respond by laughing. People may also laugh if they are uncertain of how to respond.

### **Holidays:**

For the New Year (1–3 Jan.), families gather to exchange gifts, honor the dead, and enjoy large meals. People often dress in traditional clothing, though this is becoming less common in cities.

South Koreans celebrate the Lunar New Year (January or February) by visiting hometowns or vacationing in resorts. The other major family holiday is *Chuseok* (Harvest Moon Festival) in September or October, when family members visit ancestral tombs (including those of immediate ancestors) to clean the grave site and leave food offerings in honor of the dead.

Other holidays include Independence Movement Day (1 Mar.), Children's Day (5 May), Buddha's Birthday (in April or May, observed according to the lunar calendar), Memorial Day (6 June), Independence Day (15 Aug.), National Foundation Day (3 Oct.), and Christmas. Arbor Day (5 Apr.), Armed Forces Day (1 Oct.), and Korean Language Day (9 Oct.) are marked by various celebrations but are not public holidays.